

# FEATURES OF ISLAMIC TOURISM

**N.K. Gabdrakhmanov , Kazan federal university**

**N.M. Biktimirov, Kazan federal university**

**M.V. Rozhko, Kazan federal university**

**R.M. Mardanshina, Kazan federal university**

## ABSTRACT

*This paper refers to the evolution and development of halal tourism in Russia. To disclose the historical background, basic requirements, problems and prospects of tourism destination development, analytical, synthetic and statistical methods of investigation have been used.*

*The international market of halal products is gaining its potential together with the growth of the Islamic population and the spread of the Islamic traditions. Therefore, the particular attention has been paid to the analysis of the demographic development of Muslims which indicates in general the high dynamics of population growth in the Islamic countries.*

*The analysis of tourist exchange between Muslim states and Russia shows a negative balance today. There is a passivity of Muslim countries citizens in terms of outbound tourism. This complicates the halal tourism development in general, whereas the consumption of halal products on the part of non-Muslim countries population increases.*

*Halal industry in the Russian Federation has originated recently. Therefore this area of expertise is underexplored in scientific terms, and the conceptual apparatus is being developed. Historically there have been Muslim regions on the territory of Russia, nevertheless halal tourism is just beginning to develop, and a long period of time is needed for its dynamic growth.*

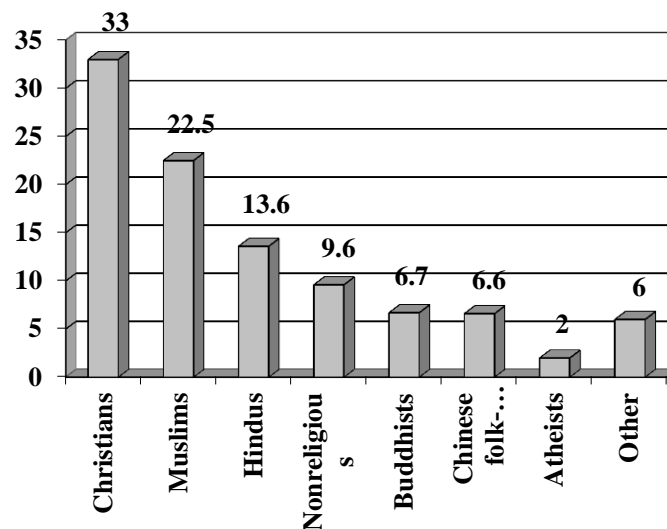
*The largest producer and consumer countries of halal products have been highlighted in the paper. Some measures for the development of the Islamic economy, especially the purposeful activities of Tatarstan's authorities, one of the most industrialized regions of Russia with more than half of Muslim population, have been also analyzed.*

**Key words:** halal tourism, Islamic tourism, halal industry, halal products.

## INTRODUCTION

Islamic tourism as a new social phenomenon, associated to some extent with dogma and practice of Islam, dates back to the late 1980s. These studies have always had and will have a pragmatic character especially in the conditions of considerable representation of Muslims constituting almost a quarter of the world's population (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**  
**WORLD RELIGIONS BY THE NUMBER OF ADHERENTS (%) (TURNER D. J.,2010)**



Fancy fusion of Islam and tourism has been reflected in different directions of geographic mobility, namely in religious tourism, spiritual tourism, halal tourism and pilgrimage, all of them reproducing the elements of Islam spirituality.

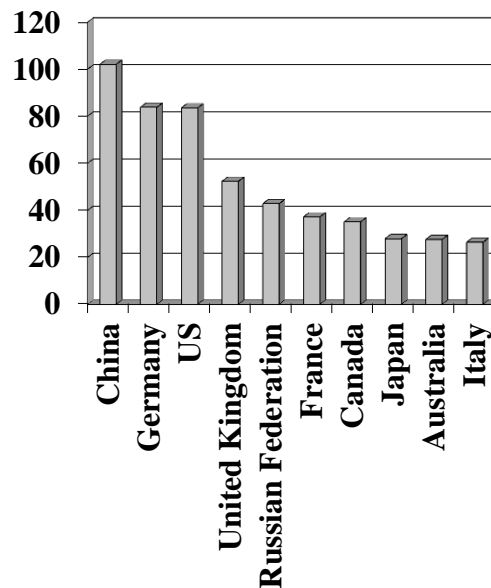
In the paper we address these issues of Islamic tourism. Since our study may be of interest not only to Muslims but to the representatives of other confessions, we first intend to consider some significant basics of Islamic knowledge.

### CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In Islam, the concept of pilgrim has a completely different meaning than in other religions. From the Islamic point of view, a pilgrim is a person who committed the Hajj to Mecca, and then the honorary title of Hajji is added to the pilgrim's name. Since visiting other places of worship is not considered as a pilgrimage according to the Quran, a certain conceptual problem appears that should be focused on and tackled by the scientific community of religious scholars.

Religious (Islamic) tourism is a cross between hedonic conceptualization of tourism and the actual Quran pilgrimage. Despite the "challenges" of Islam to travel a certain passivity of Muslim countries citizens in terms of outbound tourism still exists. Thus, according to the WTO Annual Report 2012 most of the travel expenses accounted for non-Muslim countries, including (in billions): China - 102.0; Germany - 83.8; the US - 83.5; the United Kingdom - 52.3; the Russian Federation - 42.8; France - 37.2; Canada - 35.1; Japan - 27.9; Australia - 27.6; Italy - 26.4 (Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
**TRAVEL COSTS IN 2012 (billion US dollars)**



The research conducted (the degree of involvement or non-involvement; openness to people of other faiths; respect for all religions, or on the contrary, arrogant attitude to the representatives of other religions; preference for general or certain spiritual tourism) showed that 60% of respondents shared common human values regardless their religious exclusivity (Haq F., Newby L., Jackson J., 2009). This means that the market segmentation of tourist services can be carried out according to the national and / or individual categories rather than spiritual ones, and that would require a corresponding strategy of the receiving party.

### **HALAL TOURISM MARKET DEVELOPMENT**

Recently, a number of Muslim and non-Muslim countries attract Muslim tourists offering halal tourism services. Malaysia is considered the first country that initiated this kind of tourism. Halal tours require separate pools, halal drinks, food and entertainment, prayer time announcing, prayer rooms, no music, and so on. The whole industry is working for this segment – food and cosmetics. For halal products not to be in contact with the 'prohibited goods', the Port of Rotterdam, for instance, selects individual storehouses. 20% of Nestle plants fully comply with halal category. Today McDonald's offers halal food as well. As The Economist notes, these consumer preferences are commercialized by the version 'be holier than others' (The Economist, May 25th 2013). For introduction of a new concept - halal tourism - a group of hotels Al Jawhara Hospitality Group (JHG) in Dubai organized PureRooms event, the first of its kind in the Middle East, which strictly complies with Islamic hospitality.

It is noteworthy that there is still no specific definition for halal tourism. This product usually implies accommodation services in accordance with the Islam norms. Despite the fact that 60-70% of the clients of the hotel group are non-Muslims, halal hotels usually observe a strict dress code, and it is not allowed to men and women to be encountered in public places (in this case individual cafeterias, restaurants and swimming pools are offered). If an institution provides services both for Muslims and non-Muslims, all its equipment, personnel, food supplies should be divided into two sections.

Against the background of this trend many hotels tend to tailor their services to Muslim visitors. During last year Ramadan, the world famous Sacher Hotel in Vienna provided special rooms for prayer, and organized a pre-dawn meal (suhoor) and breaking fast (iftar). Intentions to develop halal hotel business extend beyond the Muslim countries. Almulla Hospitality and Kempinski companies are going to open a total of 150 halal hotels in the Middle East, Europe and North America. In addition Jawhara hotel chain is planning to make 25% of its hotels halal in Dubai. New hotels under the brand Shaza will be opened in North Africa, the Gulf region and Europe. The world's largest Best Western hotel chain has already opened halal hotels in Malaysia, Bahrain and Oman and is planning to expand in this area. Brussels Rezidor Hotel Group, which owns such brands as Radisson Blu and Park Inn, expects 20 percent annual halal hotel business growth next decade. In preparation for the World Cup a new halal hotel Coral International was opened in Cape Town, South Africa, specifically for football players from Algeria and Cameroon.

These facts indicate that this huge and essentially untapped market is slowly ceasing to be purely a niche market. However, along with its development Islamophobia is growing in Europe and in the West, where many countries are considering a ban on the niqab. If present trends continue, countries like France, which has so far been a fashionable tourist destination for wealthy Arabs, will incur heavy losses in the tourism business.

In 2009, a team of enterprising Muslims, top managers of the leading travel companies and the world's largest companies, proposed the idea of arranging tourism and recreation in accordance with the rules of Islam. This laid the foundation for a new concept of halal tourism and recreation under the brand name Halal Booking ®. Thanks to easy website navigation and online booking system, one can plan vacation by choosing holiday destination.

Halal resorts provide separate spa facilities, swimming pools and beaches for men and women, as well as beaches and swimming pools for families with the Islamic dress code. All food complies with halal standards, cafes and restaurants offer only soft drinks, and prayer premises are available. Entertainment programs are also consistent with the norms of Islam, and villas are specifically designed for Muslim families. In addition to the comfortable interior, they have large swimming pools with sun decks fully protected from prying eyes, allowing the Muslim families to relax and enjoy the magnificent views of the sea and nature. The beaches are within easy reach of most houses.

As international experts note, the potential of the international market of halal products is increasing along with the growth of the Islamic population and the spread of Islamic traditions. Moreover these goods are also bought by consumers who do not belong to the Muslim religion; they prefer halal products perceiving them as ecological and organic (Gabbrakhmanov N.K., Vladimir, Rubtzov; Marat, Mustafin, 2014, p.247). This trend is peculiar for the international market including Russia. Growth of the Muslim population in certain parts of the world naturally leads to increasing demand for halal products. It is estimated that the total number of Muslims is more than 1.5 billion people. Among the largest countries that produce and consume halal products are: Indonesia - 180 million people, India - 140 million, Pakistan - 130 million, the Middle East - 200 million, Africa - 300 million, Malaysia - 14 million, North America - 8 million, Europe - more than 56 million, and Russia - about 27.5 million people (Official statistics website "The Muslim population and demography", date of the application March 2016). The given data lead to the conclusion that these countries can sometimes fail to meet the demand for halal products independently, and they have to import food and non-food items. Manufacture and supply of cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and services (e.g. in finance and tourism) focused on the Muslim population also grow.

The Russian Federation possessing regions (Gabdrakhmanov N.K., Roshko, Mikhail, 2014, p.267) with high proportion of the Muslim population does not stand aside actively developing halal industry in recent years. The Commonwealth of Independent States member countries are engaged in halal production businesses led by the representatives of different nations (The Committee on Halal standards in the Republic of Tatarstan, date of the application March 2016). These companies operate in various sectors: food processing, catering, hotel industry, health care, etc. Halal industry exhibitions are held regularly in Russia and in many other countries.

## CONCLUSION

Halal tourism is a relatively new product in the tourism industry which is geared towards Muslim families who abide by the rules of Islam.

Halal tourism is now in high demand in many countries around the world (N.K. Gabdrakhmanov, V.A. Rubtsov., 2015). It has been confirmed by the statistical data and the great concernment of large companies to develop this segment. As for the countries that are not traditionally attributed to Muslim nations, they are also interested in the development of the halal industry and tourism, hence, the latter ceases to be purely a niche product.

Being a multinational and multiconfessional country (Biktimirov, N., Gabdrakhmanov N.K., Rubtsov, V., Mustaphin, M., Arzhantseva, N., 2015, p. 267; Gabdrakhmanov N.K., 2014, p.202), Russia traditionally maintains ties with different countries including Muslim states. Therefore halal tourism development in the Russian Federation is a completely natural process. It may intensify tourist flows within the country and increase the number of tourists from the Muslim world. Given the fact that halal food production industry and catering in some regions of Russia, especially in the areas with high proportion of Muslims (e.g. the Republic of Tatarstan), are developing appropriately, country's halal tourism development looks like a realizable task. It suggests the need to undertake a whole range of activities like improving halal hotels chain, guest services etc.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

The work is performed according to the Russian Foundation for Humanities (Project №15-11-16010) and Government of Republic of Tatarstan.

## REFERENCES

- Biktimirov, N., Gabdrakhmanov N.K., Rubtsov, V., Mustaphin, M., Arzhantseva, N. Peculiar features of the tatar people migration on the territory of Tatarstan // *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 5 (24), pp. 267-271
- Consuming passions. Muslim consumers are looking beyond the traditional religious stipulations on meat and finance. Time to have fun // *The Economist*. May 25th 2013. URL: <http://www.economist.com/news/international/21578380-muslim-consumers-are-looking-beyond-traditional-religious-stipulations-meat-and>
- Gabdrakhmanov N.K. Tourist and Recreational Positioning of Tatarstan Republic: Cluster Analysis // *World Applied Sciences Journal* 30 (Management, Economics, Technology & Tourism), 2014 - pp.202-205
- Gabdrakhmanov N.K., Roshko, Mikhail Factor analysis in tourism development // *POLITICAL SCIENCES, LAW, FINANCE, ECONOMICS AND TOURISM, VOL IV* Book Series: International Multi-disciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts Pages: 267-271 Published: 2014
- Gabdrakhmanov N.K., Vladimir, Rubtsov; Marat, Mustafin Historical and cultural heritage in tourism development // *POLITICAL SCIENCES, LAW, FINANCE, ECONOMICS AND TOURISM, VOL III* Book Series: International Multi-disciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts Pages: 247-253 Published: 2014

- Haq F., Newby L., Jackson J. Segmentation of the spiritual tourism market // ANZMAC: Australian & New Zealand Marketing Academy - Conference, Crown Promenade, Melbourne, 30 November - 2 December 2009 / URL: <http://www.duplication.net.au/ANZMAC09/papers/ANZMAC2009-009.pdf>
- N.K. Gabdrakhmanov, V.A. Rubtsov. The Objects of Social Infrastructure in the Social Image of the Region Shaping // Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 140
- Official statistics website "The Muslim population and demography".  
URL: <http://www.muslimpopulation.com/Europe/>.
- The Committee on Halal standards in the Republic of Tatarstan.URL: <http://halalrt.com/newslist?i=2676>
- Turner D. J., Complete Religion: Year In Review 2010. Encyclopedia Britannica.  
URL:<https://global.britannica.com/topic/religion-Year-In-Review-2010/Worldwide-Adherents-of-All-Religions>;
- UNWTO Tourism Highlights. 2013 Edition. – P. 13.  
URL: [http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto\\_highlights13\\_en\\_hr.pdf](http://dtxqtq4w60xqpw.cloudfront.net/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_highlights13_en_hr.pdf)